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ABSTRACT

This study was intended to see if the instructional practices of social studies teacher educators could promote positive change in preservice teachers' attitudes towards the rationales for teaching social studies. It examined the effect of roleplay on the attitude change of preservice elementary teachers toward the reflective inquiry rationale for teaching social studies and the persistence of any attitude change. Fifty-seven preservice elementary teachers from Pennsylvania State University took part in the study. The subjects responded to the reflective inquiry subscale of the Searles-MacPherson Social Studies Questionnaire. They were ranked according to their subscale scores and randomly assigned to the treatment or control groups. The subjects responded to the same questionnaire immediately following the treatment and again three weeks later. The Likert Scales and an analyses of variance were used to analyze the data. Findings revealed that: (1) all groups changed their attitudes toward the reflective rationale; (2) the attitude change of the control groups was not sustained for three weeks; and (3) the attitude change of the treatment group increased, though insignificantly, three weeks after the treatment. Implications are discussed with regard to attitude change theory, methodology, and teacher education. Based upon the principles of attitude change theory, the methodology used in this study, and preservice social studies education course work, several recommendations for further research are made. Fifteen references are included. (GEA)

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THE EFFECTS OF ROLEPLAY ON CHANGING ATTITUDES
OF PRESERVICE ELEMENTARY SOCIAL STUDIES TEACHERS
TOWARD REFLECTIVE INQUIRY

Presented at EERA

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Background

It has been asserted that social studies teacher education has placed insufficient emphasis on defining social studies and providing an educational rationale for teaching it. As a result, confusion concerning the definition and purpose of social studies is said to characterize the social studies teaching profession. Evidence for this assertion and apparent confusion in the field is based on competing theories of curriculum and theoretically incongruent classroom practice.

The confusion concerning the definition and purpose of social studies has been illustrated by several analyses of curriculum. One view identifies citizen education as the primary goal of social studies. This perspective suggests three "traditions" to guide social studies instruction: 1) social studies as citizenship transmission; 2) social studies as social science; and 3) social science as reflective inquiry (Barr, Barth and Shermis, 1977).

A second view of the foundations of social studies curricula includes the three traditions, but also identifies common values, social problems, and citizen actions as rationales that have been used to organize social studies education (Stanley, 1981).

Of those rationales mentioned, a third view identifies only social science inquiry as a tradition that has been implemented in school. In addition to this rationale, critical thinking on public controversy, social action and moral development were described as approaches used for social studies instruction (Newmann, 1985).

In addition to the themes and rationales that have been proposed, Newmann (1985) states that various topic-related studies have received increased attention in the field: global education, law-related education, ethnic studies,

environmental issues, the holocaust and prevention of nuclear war.

Similarly, the findings from several empirical studies show a lack of agreement among educators at all levels about the definition and goals of social studies (Joyce, Alleman-Brooks, Orimoloye, 1982; MacPherson, 1979; and Morrissett, 1977).

Surprisingly, these conflicting conceptions of social studies are not present in the mainstream pattern of practice. Rather than confusion concerning the ends and means of curriculum and instruction, ^{there is} and a widely held set of common instructional strategies (Goodlad, 1984; Shaver, Davis, and Helburn, 1979; Superka, Hawke and Morrissett, 1980). It was found that the traditional content and passive learning that characterize social studies education was the result of textbooks constituting the major instructional tool used in the classrooms.

Additionally, the effects of the back-to-basics movements and emphasis on standardized testing has contributed to the ambiguity and contradictions in the field. As Goodlad (1984) indicates, social studies is given less time, on the average than language arts and mathematics in grade K-6. If emphasis on accountability continues, time given to social studies instruction will remain the same or be reduced in the future.

Obviously, as these studies show a number of factors contribute to the lack of definition and cohesion in the social studies curriculum. However, Shaver et al. (1979) point out:

The teacher is the key to what social studies will be for any student. The day-to-day classroom experiences of students emerge from the teachers' beliefs about schooling and social studies in particular. (p.151)

The fact that teachers' attitudes and beliefs can be passed on to their students is cause for concern. Attitudes are affective responses that express one's feelings about people, places and things. Beliefs also reflect personal likes and dislikes, but they are cognitive responses. Clearly, all teachers

teach attitudes and beliefs, consciously or not. The beliefs and preferences that teachers express when teaching social studies serve to teach students that some content areas are more or less desirable than others. Surveying students perceptions about social studies, researchers, Schug, Todd and Berry (1984) found that elementary students do not rate social studies as a favorite subject; it is seldom regarded as important. Consequently, teachers cannot afford to be unclear about the nature and purpose of social studies.

Need for the Study

Research studies have established the lack of definition and cohesion in the social studies curriculum. This confusion in the field is attributed to the lack of agreement among educators concerning rationales for teaching social studies. Equally confused is the preservice educator who holds more than one perspective toward social studies. Since it is believed that students choose to accept the attitudes of those whom they find credible, such as teachers, parents and peers, the major responsibility for the development of positive social studies attitudes must rest with teacher educators.

At present, teacher education programs are viewed as less than effective in educating preservice teachers. This lack of impact of teacher education courses has been examined by numerous teacher education reform committees. In a related effort Rath and Katz (1982) examined factors that might account for this dilemma with regard to social studies education courses. Based on the data obtained in their study, they concluded:

...if teacher educators use primarily lecture and discussion in advancing their goals....there can be little surprise that teacher education courses are seen as weak in impact. (p. 280)

Too often preservice educators complain of the irrelevance of course content and the unstimulating teaching of method instructors. These criticisms seem grounded since Rath and Katz (1982) found little congruence between

instructional strategies advocated by social studies method instructors and those used by them. In other words, the practices of teacher educators do have a definite impact on the attitudes and practices of preservice educators.

Consequently, if teacher educators take responsibility for the lack of cohesion in the field, then they must be more concerned not only with preservice teachers' attitudes toward theoretical perspectives for teaching social studies, but also with using instructional strategies that have a greater influence on changing preservice teachers' attitudes, beliefs and behavior toward them.

A review of literature reveals that a limited number of studies has been undertaken regarding preservice teachers' perceptions and perspectives towards teaching social studies.

Of those studies that have attempted to ascertain preservice teachers ideology or attitudes, Nelson and Palsonsky (1980) report that social studies student teacher interviewees were puzzled and confused by questions pertaining to the definition, purpose and content of social studies. Relatedly, Melvin, Hammond, Koeller and Pooler (1981) surveyed preservice student teachers from four universities and concluded that geographical backgrounds had no correlation to perceptions, suggesting that the confusion about social studies is a nationwide phenomenon.

Researchers engaged in field-based studies concur that preservice teachers do hold more than one perspective and that scholarly conceptions of social studies have little to do with the student teachers' curricula practices (Goodman and Adler, 1985). Moreover, by examining the processes through which preservice teacher perspectives are created, Ross (1986) found that a teacher's perspective was the result of three interacting sets of variables: personal, institutional and the interaction between the two.

The data obtained from these studies have increased our knowledge of preservice teachers' perceptions of social studies. However, since these attitudes and instructional practices, ultimately will affect students' attitudes towards social studies, much remains to be learned about preservice teachers' attitudes and attitude change regarding the teaching of social studies.

This study, then, was intended to see if the instructional practices of social studies teacher educators can promote positive change in preservice teachers' attitudes towards the rationales for teaching social studies.

Purpose of the Study

The present study was intended to examine the effect of roleplay on the attitude change of preservice elementary teachers toward the reflective inquiry rationale for teaching social studies and the persistence of any attitude change.

Research Questions

1. Will the posttest mean attitude score of the treatment (roleplay) group be higher than that of the control groups (passive listening and map games)?
2. Will the delayed mean attitude scores of the treatment group be higher than that of the control groups?
3. Will the change in attitudes, if any, of the treatment group persist three weeks later?

Methods and Techniques and Data Source

The experimental study was conducted during the Spring Term, 1988, at The Pennsylvania State University. Fifty-seven preservice elementary teachers from three sections of Social Studies 430 took part in the study. Three weeks

prior to the treatment, the subjects were requested to respond to the reflective inquiry subscale of the Searles-MacPherson Social Studies Questionnaire (pre-test attitude measure). Using the pre-established mean score of 43, subjects who scored at or above the minimum score were identified as reflective. Based on obtained scores, students were identified as non-reflective, only one was identified as reflective. Students were ranked according to their Reflective Inquiry Subscale score, then randomly assigned to the treatment or control groups. After all subjects read the roleplay script (an explanation of the reflective inquiry rationale), the treatment subjects (roleplayers) were paired with control subjects (passive listeners). The roleplayers were required to present convincing arguments advocating the reflective inquiry approach for teaching social studies. The passive listeners were requested to actively listen to the talk, but to not make any verbal responses. The control subjects who were placed in the map group were asked to play a map game in an adjacent room. Immediately after the treatment, the subjects were requested to respond to the Searles-MacPherson Social Studies Questionnaire to measure any change in their attitude. Three weeks after receiving the treatment, the subjects were again requested to respond to the 36 item Searles- MacPherson Social Studies Questionnaire to measure retention of attitude change.

The following analyses were performed on the data: 1)LIKRT- a scoring program for the Likert Scales, 2) ANOVR-a scoring program for an analysis of variance with repeated measures.

Findings

The findings, resulting from testing the three hypotheses were as follows:

Hypothesis 1 was not rejected, indicating that there was no significant difference in the posttest mean attitude scores between the roleplay group and the passive listening group and the map game group.

Hypothesis 2 was not rejected, indicating that there was no significant difference in the delayed mean attitude scores between the roleplay group and the passive listening group and the map group.

Hypothesis 3 was not rejected, indicating that there was no significant difference in the mean attitude score of the roleplay group from the posttest to the retention test.

Conclusions

1. After reading the roleplay script and participating in the experimental conditions, all groups changed their attitudes toward the reflective rationale. However, the differences were not significant between the roleplay group and the passive listening group and the map group.

2. The attitude change of the passive listening group and the map group was not sustained for three weeks following their reading of the roleplay script.

3. The attitude change of the roleplay group increased three weeks after the treatment. However, the difference was not significant.

Implications

Based upon the findings the following implications can be presented with regard to attitude change theory, methodology and teacher education:

Attitude Change Theory

1. While not significantly different, the results of the treatment means scores on the dependent measure suggest that attitudes toward the reflective inquiry rationale can be changed and sustained.

2. Although not significantly different, the groups' mean posttest score and mean delayed score suggest that the roleplay sustains an attitude change more than passive listening and game playing.

3. Roleplay variables could have influenced the subjects overt verbalizations.

Methodology

1. Roleplayers' persuasive talks might have influenced the passive listeners.

2. The positive effect of game playing might have influenced the subjects general attitude toward social studies which in turn might account for the increase in their posttest mean score. The map game group had the highest post-test mean score.

Teacher Education

1. Findings from qualitative data suggest that preservice teachers had little experience with or knowledge of the reflective inquiry approach for teaching social studies.

2. Support is provided for the use of a variety of instructional strategies with preservice teachers.

Recommendations for Further Research

Based upon the principles of attitude change theory, the methodology used in this study and preservice social studies education course work the following recommendations are suggested:

Attitude Change Theory

1. The researcher using roleplay as defined in this study should increase the length of exposure to the information contained in the script. Increased reading time might increase attention to and comprehension of the communication.

2. The researcher using a roleplay experience as described in this study should inform roleplayers of their assignment prior to reading the script to ensure bias scanning.

3. The researcher utilizing a roleplay script might use a persuasive communication to ensure a significant difference in the roleplay treatment.

4. Additional research is needed to study and compare roleplaying defined as debating on the attitude change of preservice teacher toward reflective inquiry. Better quality arguments and an increased number of arguments, might help those roleplayers who had difficulty presenting convincing arguments for the reflective inquiry rationale.

Future research is needed to test the affect of a reward incentive (i.e. extra credit) on the attitude change of preservice teachers.

Methodology

1. Future research based on this study's control group (map group) should use games unrelated to social studies. Game players reported that they enjoyed their task. They scored the highest on the posttest measure. Utilizing a math game, might minimize the effects of active participation.

2. Future research on testing the effects of roleplay on the attitude change of preservice teachers should consider a Solomon F group design. A control group that does not participate in the study at all might minimize the Hawthorn effect.

Future research using a modified Pretest-Posttest design should consider extending the time between dependent measures to reduce student resistance to repeated testing.

Teacher Education

1. The findings of this study suggest there is a need to include a sequence of experiences within the teacher preparation program that will expose students to the reflective inquiry rationale. Experience with and increased knowledge of the reflective inquiry approach for teaching social studies might facilitate a change in attitude.

2. Teacher educators should demonstrate instructional strategies and encourage the active participation of preservice teachers since they will be expected to model these techniques for their future charges. It was reported that a greater percentage of the roleplayers had no prior experience with the technique. Also, two out of the three sections of social studies education had no previous experience with playing or evaluating games.

3. Future research on the effect of roleplay on attitude change toward the social studies rationales should be investigated.

4. Teacher educators should utilize a variety of instructional strategies to convey course material since each experimental condition (roleplay, passive listening and games) induced a gain in attitude change.

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